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SECURITY COUNCIL
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Letter dated 20 January 1998 from the Permanent Representatives of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and the United States of America to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

We have the honour to transmit the text of a Charter of Partnership among the United States of America and the Republic of Estonia, Republic of Latvia and Republic of Lithuania, signed by Mr. William Clinton, President of the United States of America, Mr. Lennart Meri, President of the Republic of Estonia, Mr. Guntis Ulmanis, President of the Republic of Latvia, and Mr. Algirdas Brazauskas, President of the Republic of Lithuania, in Washington, D.C., on 16 January 1998 (see annex).

We should be grateful if the text of the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Trivimi VELLISTE
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Estonia to the United Nations

(Signed) Janis PRIEDKALNS
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Latvia to the United Nations

(Signed) Oskaras JUSYS
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Lithuania to the United Nations

(Signed) Bill RICHARDSON
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations

Annex

[Original: English]

Charter of Partnership among the United States of America and the Republic of Estonia, Republic of Latvia and Republic of Lithuania, signed on 16 January 1998 at Washington, D.C.

Preamble

The United States of America, the Republic of Estonia, the Republic of Latvia and the Republic of Lithuania, hereinafter referred to as Partners,

Sharing a common vision of a peaceful and increasingly integrated Europe, free of divisions, dedicated to democracy, the rule of law, free markets, and respect for the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all people;

Recognizing the historic opportunity to build a new Europe, in which each State is secure in its internationally recognized borders and respects the independence and territorial integrity of all members of the transatlantic community;

Determined to strengthen their bilateral relations as a contribution to building this new Europe, and to enhance the security of all States through the adaptation and enlargement of European and transatlantic institutions;

Committed to the full development of human potential within just and inclusive societies attentive to the promotion of harmonious and equitable relations among individuals belonging to diverse ethnic and religious groups;

Avowing a common interest in developing cooperative, mutually respectful relations with all other States in the region;

Recalling the friendly relations that have been continuously maintained between the United States of America and the Republic of Estonia, the Republic of Latvia and the Republic of Lithuania since 1922;

Further recalling that the United States of America never recognized the forcible incorporation of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania into the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in 1940, but rather regards their statehood as uninterrupted since the establishment of their independence, a policy which the United States has restated continuously for five decades;

Celebrating the rich contributions that immigrants from Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania have made to the multi-ethnic culture of the United States of America, as well as the European heritage enjoyed by the United States as a beneficiary of the contributions of intellectuals, artists, and Hanseatic traders from the Baltic States to the development of Europe; praising the contributions of United States citizens to the liberation and rebuilding of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania;

Affirm as a political commitment declared at the highest level, the following principles and procedures to guide their individual and joint efforts to achieve the goals of this Charter.

Principles of partnership

The United States of America has a real, profound, and enduring interest in the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, and security of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

The United States of America warmly welcomes the success of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania in regaining their freedom and resuming their rightful places in the community of nations.

The United States of America respects the sacrifices and hardships undertaken by the people of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania to re-establish their independence. It encourages efforts by these States to continue to expand their political, economic, security and social ties with other nations as full members of the transatlantic community.

The Partners affirm their commitment to the rule of law as a foundation for a transatlantic community of free and democratic nations, and to the responsibility of all just societies to protect and respect the human rights and civil liberties of all individuals residing within their territories.

The Partners underscore their shared commitment to the principles and obligations contained in the Charter of the United Nations.

The Partners reaffirm their shared commitment to the purposes, principles, and provisions of the Helsinki Final Act and subsequent documents of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), including the Charter of Paris and the documents adopted at the Lisbon OSCE Summit.

The Partners will observe in good faith their commitments to promote and respect the standards for human rights embodied in the above-mentioned OSCE documents and in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. They will implement their legislation protecting such human rights fully and equitably.

The United States of America commends the measures taken by Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania to advance the integration of Europe by establishing close cooperative relations among themselves and with their neighbours, as well as their promotion of regional cooperation through their participation in forums such as the Baltic Assembly, Baltic Council of Ministers, and the Council of Baltic Sea States.

Viewing good-neighbourly relations as fundamental to overall security and stability in the transatlantic community, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania reaffirm their determination to enhance further bilateral relations between themselves and with other neighbouring States.

The Partners will intensify their efforts to promote the security, prosperity and stability of the region. The Partners will draw on the points noted below in focusing their efforts to deepen the integration of the Baltic States into transatlantic and European institutions, promote cooperation in security and defence, and develop the economies of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

A commitment to integration

As part of a common vision of a Europe whole and free, the Partners declare that their shared goal is the full integration of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania into European and transatlantic political, economic, security, and defence institutions. Europe will not be fully secure unless Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania are each secure.

The Partners reaffirm their commitment to the principle, established in the Helsinki Final Act, repeated in the Budapest and Lisbon OSCE summit declarations, and also contained in the OSCE Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security, that the security of all States in the Euro-Atlantic community is indivisible.

The Partners further share a commitment to the core principle, also articulated in the OSCE Code of Conduct and reiterated in subsequent OSCE summit declarations, that each State has the inherent right to individual and collective self-defence as well as the right freely to choose its own security arrangements, including treaties of alliance.

The Partners support the vital role being played by a number of complementary institutions and bodies - including OSCE, the European Union, the West European Union, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council, the Council of Europe, and the Council of Baltic Sea States - in achieving the partners' shared goal of an integrated, secure, and undivided Europe.

They believe that, irrespective of factors related to history or geography, such institutions should be open to all European democracies willing and able to shoulder the responsibilities and obligations of membership, as determined by those institutions.

The Partners welcome a strong and vibrant OSCE dedicated to promoting democratic institutions, human rights and fundamental freedoms. They strongly support OSCE's role as a mechanism to prevent, manage and resolve conflicts and crises.

Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania each reaffirm their goal to become full members of all European and transatlantic institutions, including the European Union and NATO.

The United States of America recalls its long-standing support for the enlargement of the European Union, affirming it as a core institution in the new

Europe and declaring that a stronger, larger, and outward-looking European Union will further security and prosperity for all of Europe.

The Partners believe that the enlargement of NATO will enhance the security of the United States, Canada, and all the countries in Europe, including those States not immediately invited to membership or not currently interested in membership.

The United States of America welcomes the aspirations and supports the efforts of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania to join NATO. It affirms its view that NATO's partners can become members as each aspirant proves itself able and willing to assume the responsibilities and obligations of membership, and as NATO determines that the inclusion of these nations would serve European stability and the strategic interests of the Alliance.

The United States of America reiterates its view that the enlargement of NATO is an ongoing process. It looks forward to future enlargements, and remains convinced that, not only will NATO's door remain open to new members, but that the first countries invited to membership will not be the last. No non-NATO country has a veto over Alliance decisions. The United States notes that the Alliance is prepared to strengthen its consultations with aspirant countries on the full range of issues related to possible NATO membership.

The Partners welcome the results of the Madrid Summit. They support the Alliance's commitment to an open-door policy and welcome the Alliance's recognition of the Baltic States as aspiring members of NATO. Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania pledge to deepen their close relations with the Alliance through the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council, the Partnership for Peace, and the intensified dialogue process.

The Partners underscore their interest in Russia's democratic and stable development and support a strengthened NATO-Russia relationship as a core element of their shared vision of a new and peaceful Europe. They welcome the signing of the NATO-Russia Founding Act and the NATO-Ukraine Charter, both of which further improve European security.

Security cooperation

The Partners will consult together, as well as with other countries, in the event that a Partner perceives that its territorial integrity, independence, or security is threatened or at risk. The Partners will use bilateral and multilateral mechanisms for such consultations.

The United States welcomes and appreciates the contributions that Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania have already made to European security through the peaceful restoration of independence and their active participation in the Partnership for Peace. The United States also welcomes their contributions to the Implementation Force (IFOR), the Stabilization Force (SFOR), and other international peacekeeping missions.

Building on the existing cooperation among their respective ministries of defence and armed forces, the United States of America supports the efforts of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania to provide for their legitimate defence needs, including development of appropriate and interoperable military forces.

The Partners welcome the establishment of the Baltic Security Assistance Group (BALTSEA) as an effective body for international coordination of security assistance to Estonia's, Latvia's, and Lithuania's defence forces.

The Partners will cooperate further in the development and expansion of defence initiatives, such as the Baltic Peacekeeping Battalion (BaltBat), the Baltic Squadron (Baltron), and the Baltic airspace management regime (BaltNet), which provide a tangible demonstration of practical cooperation enhancing the common security of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, and the transatlantic community.

The Partners intend to continue mutually beneficial military cooperation and will maintain regular consultations, using the established Bilateral Working Group on Defense and Military Relations.

Economic cooperation

The Partners affirm their commitment to free market mechanisms as the best means to meet the material needs of their people.

The United States of America commends the substantial progress its Baltic Partners have made to implement economic reform and development and their transition to free market economies.

Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania emphasize their intention to deepen their economic integration with Europe and the global economy, based on the principles of free movement of people, goods, capital and services.

Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania underscore their commitment to continue market-oriented economic reforms and to express their resolve to achieve full integration into global economic bodies, such as the World Trade Organization (WTO), while creating conditions for smoothly acceding to the European Union.

Noting this objective, the United States of America will work to facilitate the integration of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania with the world economy and appropriate international economic organizations, in particular, WTO and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), on appropriate commercial terms.

The Partners will work individually and together to develop legal and financial conditions in their countries conducive to international investment. Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania welcome United States investment in their economies.

The Partners will continue to strive for mutually advantageous economic relations, building on the principles of equality and non-discrimination to create the conditions necessary for such cooperation.

The Partners will commence regular consultations to further cooperation and provide for regular assessment of progress in the areas of economic development, trade, investment, and related fields. These consultations will be chaired at the appropriately high level.

Recognizing that combating international organized crime requires a multilateral effort, the Partners agree to cooperate fully in the fight against this threat to the world economy and political stability. Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania remain committed to developing sound legislation in this field and to enhancing the implementation of this legislation through the strengthening of a fair and well-functioning judicial system.

The United States-Baltic relationship

In all of these spheres of common endeavour, the Partners, building on their shared history of friendship and cooperation, solemnly reaffirm their commitment to a rich and dynamic United States-Baltic partnership for the twenty-first century.

The Partners view their partnership in the areas of political, economic, security, defence, cultural, and environmental affairs as contributing to close ties between their people and facilitating the full integration of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania into European and transatlantic structures.

In order to strengthen these ties further, the Partners will establish a Partnership Commission chaired at the appropriately high level to evaluate common efforts. This Commission will meet once a year, or as needed, to take stock of the Partnership, assess results of bilateral consultations on economic, military and other areas, and review progress achieved towards meeting the goals of this Charter.

In order better to reflect changes in the European and transatlantic political and security environment, signing Partners are committed regularly at the highest level to review this agreement.

For the United States of America:

For the Republic of Estonia:

For the Republic of Latvia:

For the Republic of Lithuania:

Washington, D.C. 16 January 1998